

Community Access Presents the Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival at New York City's Village East Cinema

NEW YORK, June 1, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- On Saturday, May 20, [Community Access](#), a New York City-based mental health nonprofit, presented its **Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival** at Village East Cinema. Changing Minds celebrates the work of teen and young adult filmmakers who, through their short films about mental health, challenge the stigma that too often surrounds those living with mental health concerns.

Community Access first launched a Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Competition in 2016 as a part of its [New York City Mental Health Film Festival](#)—the oldest and largest film festival of its kind. In 2019, the organization transformed its competition into a second festival. Since then, the Community Access has received over 3,000 films from young filmmakers worldwide. Changing Minds films have been screened in schools, libraries, and other festivals, including the Singapore Mental Health Film Festival – and sparked a lot of thoughtful dialogue along the way.

“As the pandemic has altered the lives of so many young people and had profound effects on their mental health, now is the time to give these young artists a platform and encourage self expression,” **said Cal Hedigan, CEO of Community Access.** “Throughout all of our work, we strive to uplift the voices that often go unheard; we’re proud to give space where young people can speak their truth and raise awareness about individual struggles with mental health.”

During the festival, which was made possible by support from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund and The Isora Foundation, audience members enjoyed 14 films submitted from around the world exploring themes surrounding relationships, sexuality and gender identity, cultural stigmas regarding mental health, among others. After the screening, 16 filmmakers representing 11 films participated in a discussion moderated by Livia



(Photo Credit: Sean Sime)

Caligor, an advisory board member of Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation.

“We are proud to support the Changing Minds initiative,” says **Rick Luftglass, Executive Director at the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund.** “Community Access was one of the first grantees when we launched the Illumination Fund's Arts in Health initiative. We are inspired by the work that Community Access does – looking for new ways to champion people's voices and uplift the stories we too often overlook. Changing Minds is such a creative, important way to spark discussion and combat mental health stigma.”

Selected films from the Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival will be available soon on the Changing Minds [YouTube](#) channel, and Community Access will also be hosting a series of Film Friday's Q&As with filmmakers on Instagram @communityaccessinc.

Community Access, the sponsor of the Changing Minds Festival, expands opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable

housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.

About Community Access

Founded in 1974, Community Access is a provider of supportive housing and support services in New York City for people living with mental health concerns. Rooted in the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives, Community Access expands opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. Community Access provides person-centered services that help people pursue goals that are important to them – from gaining access to an affordable home, to learning new skills; from re-establishing community ties, to setting goals for the future.

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